

I blackberried him twice and skyped him a happy Father's day.

On (new) verbs of instrument of communication:

A corpus-based contrastive case study

Since Levin's (1993) discussion of verbs of instrument of communication in her seminal work a lot of new technical means of communication have made their way to every day life and social interaction. Rather than signalling or wiring messages (two of the verbs mentioned in her list) we now resort to email facilities, mobile phones, text messages, blackberries, bluetooth and the art of voiping. For each of these specific means of communication, it can be observed that in English, Dutch and French (see also Barðdal 2003 for Icelandic), creative uses of specific verbs derived from these instruments or ways of communication can be attested (with variable degrees of frequency) :

- (1) a. I **bluetoothed** him a pic off my phone so the comparison would be valid - Samsung screens are superior, he agreed. www.howardforums.com/showthread.php?p=8312221
- b. Je te **texterai** tous les jours pour te tenir au courant.
(<http://www.destinationlondres.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=18&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&start=140>)
- c. Gisteren **mailde** ik haar dat ik vandaag langs haar huis zou komen en het CD-tje zou langsbrengen. (<http://www.verhalenlezen.nl/verhaal/Natasja.html>)

In this paper we want to zoom in on these and older verbs of instrument of communication in English, Dutch and French and address a number of interesting issues. First of all, we will examine to what extent the Dutch and the French language are equally flexible in deriving verbs from the (mostly English) noun referring to the instruments of communication and which - if any - other means are used to express the same meaning. Secondly, and more importantly, we will also examine the structural possibilities of these and older verbs of instrument of communication in comparison with one another and across the three languages (cf. Baker & Ruppenhofer 2003).

Based on corpus data analyses involving the BNC for English, Libération sur cd-rom (2000-2006) for French, 'the 27 and 38 Million Words Corpus' of the INL (Institute for Dutch Lexicology) for Dutch and web-based queries through Webcorp, Glossanet and refined Google queries, a number of structural differences within and across the three languages will be revealed both in terms of constructional frequency and in terms of structural possibilities.

First, despite the creative uses of these verbs, some structural differences between the languages still prevail in these old and new verbs of instrument of communication. For instance, while both English and Dutch allow non-pronominal realisation of object and recipient in the so called double-object construction, this is not the case for French.

Secondly, it can be observed that some verbs are more frequent in one construction than in another. For instance, while 'sms ('text') someone (something)' does occur with significant frequency in Dutch and English 'gsm ('mobile') someone (something)' occurs much less frequently, as opposed to 'skype someone (something)'.

The observed cross-linguistic differences will be positioned against the larger context of other attested differences in constructional possibilities and accounted for in terms of the languages' specific verb typology. Language-internal differences will be explained in terms of the availability of other

verbal resources and the flexibility in word-formation processes some nouns (do not) lend themselves to.

References

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